

Clean Seas and Clear Priorities



By Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi

[Red, Green, and Blue:](#) California's coastline has a hold on most of us, but if we don't stop trashing our beaches and seas, it could begin to repel us.

These days, most of us accept the importance of environmental protection. We understand that recycling reduces our need to extract new resources, and we agree that businesses should not be allowed to put toxic sludge in our drinking water. And yet, in this age of convenience, it's easy to think our individual actions don't have an impact, and without clear public will, it's easy for good bills to get lost in the shuffle of governance.

Recognizing this problem, with a diverse coalition of environmentalists, scientists, students, and community activists, I founded the [Clean Seas Coalition](#) last year to present a more unified voice in favor of legislation important to California's coastlines.

At an event last month, I joined environmentalists and California Assembly members Pedro Nava (D-Santa Barbara), Julia Brownley (D-Santa Monica), Jerry Hill (D-San Mateo), and Lori Saldana (D-San Diego) to promote a package of bills that will help provide a model the rest of the country can follow. If the bills pass the legislature and are signed into law, California will once again demonstrate trailblazing environmental leadership, phasing out the production of disposable plastic bags, polystyrene packaging, endocrine disruptor bisphenol-A, cigarette butts, and removable bottle caps, all of which blight our coastlines, pose a public health risk, and kill thousands of marine animals in California every year.

Another important bill sponsored by the Clean Seas Coalition would provide producers with an incentive to manufacture and package products that take into account the products' lifetime contributions to landfills.

Of course, the Clean Seas Coalition's work will never be done. When Ocean Futures Society founder Jean-Michel Cousteau, the son of famed ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, [visited my office last month](#) on Ocean Day, he highlighted another major problem that must be addressed: fire retardants in consumer goods. From products as wide ranging as foam mattresses and televisions, we are putting unhealthy toxins in our bodies and the ocean.

In "Call of the Killer Whale," a PBS special helmed by Cousteau that will debut on April 22, Cousteau reveals the dangers PBDEs found in fire retardants place on humans and higher-order marine mammals. Research on mammals shows that PBDEs can harm development and neurological health.

I have many memories of weekend trips to the beach, playing in the water and watching seagulls search for their next meal. Whether our children's children will be able to say the same thing is largely in our hands. I hope we don't let them down, and through the Clean Seas Coalition, I will do all I can to be a good steward to this planet. After all, while many things in life are disposable, Earth is not one of them.

